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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000746

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [ASEC](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: EQUATEUR'S SECURITY PROBLEMS REST MOSTLY WITH  
DEMOBILIZED SOLDIERS

REF: A. KINSHASA 680

[1](#)B. KINSHASA 389

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Northwestern Equateur province's primary security concerns center on the estimated 7,000 demobilized soldiers throughout the province who often attack police forces and civilians, loot and steal, and commit other crimes. Provincial officials say another pervasive problem is the military's naval forces stationed along the Congo River who harass river traders and collect illegal taxes. Authorities in Equateur say they believe insecurity is rising and claim they lack resources to respond. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The DRC's northwestern Equateur province is stable in comparison to volatile regions of the East, but local authorities complain of rising criminality. Their problems come primarily from two main groups over whom most security officials have little control: demobilized soldiers, and members of the Congolese military's naval forces. Political and military authorities told PolOff on a June 21-23 trip to the provincial capital Mbandaka the two groups are becoming increasingly troublesome and pose a serious security problem.

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DEMOBILIZED SOLDIERS  
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[1](#)3. (C) Virtually all officials PolOff met with in Mbandaka said demobilized soldiers were the biggest problem for the local population and security authorities. MONUC-Mbandaka Head of Office Guirane Ndiaye said there are approximately 7,000 ex-combatants throughout the province, with nearly 2,500 in Gemena, the province's second-largest city nearly 150 miles northeast of Mbandaka. He said groups of demobilized soldiers have attacked NGO offices, police officers, and even some MONUC personnel in the past several months, often out of frustration from not being paid their monthly stipends. Equateur Police Inspector General Leon Lukumbilo said some demobilized elements are hiding weapons and have been responsible for the deaths of several "taxi-chauffeurs" in Mbandaka in May and June. Equateur Governor Jose Makila said these ex-soldiers are largely unorganized but still dangerous, prompting him to order a curfew in Mbandaka beginning June 22 to control movements and improve security in the city.

[1](#)4. (C) Makila said most demobilized soldiers steal and loot because they have no jobs, and their reinsertion into local communities was "poorly managed." Makila and Ndimba both criticized the national disarmament agency CONADER for mishandling the demobilization of these troops. Ndiaye said

that even though demobilized soldiers were given "reinsertion kits" and monthly stipends, most immediately sold their kits, and most often spent their 25 USD per month stipends (when they receive it at all) on alcohol or food. He said there was little effort made to teach ex-combatants any vocational skills. Makila said that the best way to eliminate the threat these elements pose is by finding gainful employment for them, such as in road reconstruction or in rehabilitating the region's many defunct plantations, but offered no suggestions as to how such an initiative could be funded.

15. (C) Officials noted that the problem of demobilized soldiers is not at a crisis point, but added that without timely intervention from donors and the central government to address the issues of payment and reinsertion of ex-combatants the problem could become much worse and spread beyond the major cities. Ndiaye, who has previously served with MONUC in Ituri and the Kivus, said he was particularly worried that the ex-soldiers could become organized and ultimately manipulated by those who want to destabilize the province. Ndimba said he was additionally concerned that the FARDC had limited ability to control any potential threat, as there is just one integrated brigade (the 10th) deployed in the entire province.

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NAVAL FORCES  
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16. (C) Impunity among some of the FARDC's Naval Forces (FN) was cited as another pervasive security problem throughout Equateur. Officials said most Naval Forces elements positioned along the length of the Congo River regularly

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engage in illegal taxation and harassment of traders along the river. Ndiaye said MONUC's human rights section conducted a month-long assessment along the river in June and found that such activity is increasing. He reported that FN troops set up regular checkpoints to collect "taxes." He added that some FN elements often arrest individuals who cannot pay the demanded bribes and steal whatever food and money they can.

17. (C) Ndimba, the head of the FARDC in Equateur, claimed he had no control over the Naval Forces. He said the FN commander for Equateur reported through a different chain of command and refused to work with him on security issues. (Note: The FN commander was recalled to Kinshasa June 17 following the explosion of a military weapons depot in Mbandaka, ref A. End note.) Ndiaye said local FN officers are often out of communication range with their commanders -- or simply have no radios or communications equipment -- and thus act with impunity. Makila said that one of his top security priorities as governor is to bring the Naval Forces under control and end their illegal activities on the river.

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BEMBA LOYALISTS  
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18. (C) A third but less urgent problem is soldiers formerly loyal to Jean-Pierre Bemba, a native of northern Equateur, who were part of the Presidential Protection Detachment (DPP) and had served in the province as part of Bemba's "official" security detail. After government forces routed Bemba's militia in March fighting in Kinshasa, most of the pro-Bemba soldiers from the DPP in Equateur decided to integrate into the FARDC. Ndimba said just 200-300 remain in Gemena and Gbadolite out of an original force of nearly 1,000; the remainder were sent to training facilities in other provinces. While Ndimba claimed these ex-DPP soldiers are not much of a concern, Ndiaye of MONUC said he has received reports of Bemba-loyal DPP elements in Lisala hiding weapons. As reported ref B, a weapons cache thought to be under the control of Bemba and his loyalists was seized in Gbadolite in late March and is now under government control. Officials

with the USG-funded NGO Mines Advisory Group said there are more than 60 tons of munitions in Gbadolite that they will begin destroying in the next few weeks.

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COMMENT: TYPICAL PROBLEMS THROUGHOUT DRC  
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19. (C) Equateur's security problems are typical throughout the DRC. The issue of ex-combatants highlights the reality that despite the success of disarming and demobilizing thousands of soldiers, the hard part -- reintegration -- remains to be completed. It is now widely acknowledged by Congolese and international donor officials that community reintegration of ex-combatants was not addressed sufficiently in previous DDR plans. The Defense Minister, other GDRC Officials, civil society and honors are all calling for such programs to provide ex-combatants with sustainable skills to be developed and implemented as rapidly as possible. End comment.  
DOUGHERTY